

bamboo above him, waving it wildly to keep the sky from shutting. The remaining three plants continued growing. The shattered stem in his hand began to draw his hand down toward the earth. The sky kept growing darker

-- Brian Swann

New York NY

VENICE 1976

You were present on that Sunday
when all the bells of Venice
pealed through the morning mist
San Giorgio Maggiore looking so much like
the Christian Science Mother Church,
with its Byzantine tiles

and we admired the glassblower's craft
in a back alley of San Gregorio.
The clinking roses seemed all that remained
of the old symbols, the old guard,
and a faded world that peeled at the touch.

The waters of Il Canal Grande were misty
like memories that resurrect the moment
and surprise by their context.
From there we went on to Olga's
she the hieratic keeper of this past.
Her colloquy was intertwined with
the speech of those bells,
the idealism that would not budge
from its center, her invective
that spilled onto the canal
where Aphrodite rose once out of the sea
with the image of a city
on her headband.
"Maestro," said Ungaretti to Pound,
"you sit first," that rattan chair
a throne for laureates.

And as the vaporetto made its slow course
toward San Michelle, island of the dead,
we thought of our grandfathers pacing
their islands in the sun
making their gentle compositions --
the musician with his Symphony of Psalms
another who asked the wind to speak.

It shall never be the same
we would not want that.
But ask for another sound
to bear us on the crowded swells
to rock us gently, to send us
down the dark precincts of some
shattered step, and buoy us up again.
Remember the bells of that Sunday.
Do not forget
they will never be quite
the same as on that day.
But we were there
we were there.

-- Marc Widershien

Brookline MA

ON THE NATURE OF ANGELS

You have accurately noted how they tread
the airy waters of our upper-story
windows, summoning us to an exalted
final swim, and you have noted how they fall
into the freshly-opened blossoms of our beds,

how they ravish us with the sleek marble cocks
that one finds everywhere so mysteriously
broken from the groins of statues. Our wedlocks
are picked by them: we discover in our wives
some seedling sparks from the same fireworking shocks

that bomb-burst through our body's every cell.
As children, we prayed to be their wards, wanting
them to column night's galleries that fell
around us, to atlas the magically seen-through
skies of our rooms. We were not ready for the angel

that nearly alighted on us, dragonflying
over our succumbed bodies, and were surprised
that they had sex, surprised at how much it stings,
surprised by its warmth, and by their tongues inside
our mouths repeating their fluttering wings.